(iii) Weaving, processing and garment machinery, which are covered under TUFS, have been extended the facility of accelerated depreciation at the rate of 50%. Cost of machinery has also been reduced through Fiscal Policy measures. This further encourages modernisation.

(iv) With a view to making fabric production competitive, the custom duty on shuttleless looms has been brought from 15% to 5%.

(v) National Institute for Fashion Technology (NIFT), its six branches and Apparel Training & Design Centres (ATDCs) are running various courses/programmes to meet skilled manpower requirements of textile industry especially apparel in the field of design, merchandising and marketing.

(vi) Facilities by way of eco-testing laboratories have been created to enable exporter? to get the garments/textiles pretested for conforming to the requirements of importing countries.

(vii) The Government has launched a centrally sponsored scheme titled "Apparel Park for Export Scheme" for imparting focused thrust for setting up of apparel manufacturing units of international standards at potential growth centres and to give fillip to exports.

(viii) For upgrading infrastructure facilities at important textile centres, a scheme "Textile Centre Infrastructure Development Scheme" (TCIDS) has been launched.

Establishment of Apparel Parks in Karnataka

926. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Karnataka has sent a proposal for establishment of apparel parks at Bangalore and Bellary; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard and the targeted date for completion of the projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b)Two project proposals were received from the State Government of Karnataka for setting up Apparel Parks-one at Bangalore and the other at Bellary-under the

'Apparel Parks for Exports Schme'. The Project Approval Committee (PAC), constituted under the guidelines of the Scheme, has accorded in-principle approval to the State Government's project proposal for setting up an Apparel Park at Bangalore. The PAC has also decided that the project proposal for setting up Apparel Park at Bellary may be taken up for consideration at an appropriate stage later on after evaluating the success achieved in implementing already sanctioned Apparel Park project at Bangalore. The State Government has taken positive steps towards implementation of the Bangalore Apparel Park project and has acquired land for the same. However, the sale of plots and setting up of units is yet to take place.

Handloom weavers in the Country

927. SHRI SK. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of handloom weavers in the country, State-wise and the number of sick handloom units in the States;

(b) whether Government is providing any financial assistance to the handloom weavers; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) As per the joint census of handlooms and powerlooms conducted during 1995-96, there were 65.51 lakh persons engaged in the handloom weaving and its associated activities in the country. Statewise details is given at Annexure-I.

Due to the highly decentralized nature of the handloom industry and the seasonal activities in various parts of the country, it is not feasible to maintain data relating to sick handloom units.

(b) and (c) Government of India is providing financial assistance to the handloom weavers and their organizations for the overall development of handloom sector and the welfare of the handloom weavers through the implementation of various schemes which includes:

(1) Design Development & Training Programme

(2) Marketing Promotion Programme

(3) Mill Gate Price Scheme

(4) Deen Dayal Hathkarga Prothsahan Yojana